

Chipotle



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Naturally Raised Marketing Claim
Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Room 2607-S
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0254

As issues relating to natural and organic foods become an increasing part of our national dialog and the supply chain moves to capitalize on this emerging trend, it's critical that standard definitions are applied to commonly used terms to avoid confusion. Quite simply, without establishing a common definition for 'naturally raised', we run the risk of escalating the level of confusion and of unscrupulous suppliers glomming on to this trend when their products fall short of commonly accepted definitions and practices.

We've seen evidence of consumer confusion and efforts of suppliers to mislead the public emerging over the years as demand for natural and organic products increases. As the nation's largest restaurant seller of naturally raised meat (meat coming from animals that are fed a pure vegetarian diet, never given hormones or antibiotics, and raised in a humane way), Chipotle Mexican Grill has been working to educate its customers about the differences in animal protocols, we've found it to be a slow process, complicated by the lack of a common standard and the use of similar language to describe remarkably dissimilar practices.

What's more, current definitions of "natural" are confusing and don't speak well to the process of raising livestock; only what happens during the processing of the animals. We are of the belief that the way the animal is raised is of critical importance in differentiating "natural" from the standard industrial farming methods. One need only to look at the explosive growth rates for natural and organic foods to see how much these standards influence consumers.

As we continue to ramp up our own use of naturally raised meat, and customers learn more about the differences in protocols, we find that people are increasingly coming to our restaurants *because* they want food that is raised in this manner. Standardizing the definitions, rather than allowing them to be diluted, will help consumers make educated decisions and reduce confusion caused by suppliers marketing on inconsistent terms.

Quite simply, there's a lot at stake here. Failure to establish a common lexicon for terms associated with the raising of animals and processing of meat stands to create an environment in which consumer confusion may rise, while unscrupulous producers mislead buyers about the nature of their products in order to benefit from these changing preferences without changing their practices.

We hope you'll give this matter its' due consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann Daniels
Executive Director Purchasing
Chipotle Mexican Grill